

SOUTH WESTERN REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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February 19, 2009

TO: Connecticut State Legislative Transportation Committee
FROM: Hon. Woody Bliss, Chairman, South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
(SWRMPO) and First Selectman, Town of Weston
RE: **Proposed Legislation Related to Congestion and Electronic Tolling**

Thank you for providing our organization with an opportunity to comment on traffic congestion mitigation, the establishment of EZ Pass tolls on state highways and bridges, and pricing on Connecticut highways. Our focus has been on relieving highway congestion, especially at rush hour. Any revenue generated should be viewed as a useful byproduct of congestion mitigation.

We appeared before this committee four times in 2007 to support a comprehensive review, analysis and implementation of congestion pricing. We thank you for authorizing the "Congestion Pricing Study" last year. The statewide study has been underway since last summer. Last week at the Transportation Strategy Board meeting and at a stakeholders' meeting, the final results of the statewide study were presented. We wish to comment on the following bills before your committee. We would hope that ultimately a single bill would be offered which contains an integration of the major recommendations concerning congestion pricing.

- ***Proposed Bill #426, an Act Concerning Traffic Congestion Mitigation*** looks to a DOT employee who specializes in traffic mitigation to visit annually, "...the appropriate counterpart in every municipality that has an exit off or an entrance onto a major highway or parkway in Connecticut to determine what kind of cost-effective traffic congestion mitigation efforts could be implemented." While laudable, this initiative may not be practical to undertake by one person each year. It also probably offers minimum opportunity to relieve the problems and can best be accomplished within the ConnDOT without the need for legislation.
- ***Proposed Bill #431, An Act Concerning the Establishment of EZ Pass Tolls on State Highways and Bridges*** proposes to have the revenue that is generated be deposited in the Transportation Fund. The revenue generated should first be used for reimbursing the investment in congestion pricing technology. Any remaining revenue should be used to promote transit investments. The SWRMPO recommends that in appropriate congested locations a variable electronic toll system be instituted based upon time of day and the level of delay, as has been successfully implemented in other congested locations in the United States and across the world.
- ***Proposed Bill #445, An Act Concerning Pricing on Connecticut Highways*** proposes to "...determine the most effective method for the establishment and implementation of such pricing." The SWRMPO supports this initiative. It should be the core of the approach.
- ***Proposed Bill #6070, an Act Concerning Keeping Traffic Moving*** focuses on implementing congestion pricing "for commercial traffic only." The SWRMPO recommends all motor vehicles be considered.
- ***Proposed Bill #6213, An Act Reinstating Toll Booths on Major State Highways*** seeks to "reinstate toll booths on major state highways and ...provide the mechanism for electronic payment of tolls used in other states." The state of the art is not toll booths, but to use gantries with cameras so that vehicles can maintain the designated speed and still be recorded. Similar to #431 above, in appropriate congested locations, a variable electronic toll should be instituted based upon time of day and the level of delay.

Thank you very much for this consideration.